



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

BIOGRAPHY.

To his various and valuable studies in Italian life and history, Mr. Edward Hutton now adds a most interesting and well-written "Life of Boccaccio."*

Italy led the renaissance of learning, of literature and high art in Europe, and the study and knowledge of Italian sources is the natural beginning of all knowledge of English literature, of all European civilization and art; in fact, Chaucer's debt to Boccaccio is too well known to need repetition, and the fact that the Reeve's tale and the Franklin's tale are as likely to have derived from the French "Fabliaux" as from Boccaccio himself does not lessen the debt. Griselda walked direct out of the "Decameron," and the Knight's Tale amounts to a transcription of the "Teseide."

"The Study of an Heroic Life" Mr. Hutton calls his book in his dedication, and an heroic life it is; a prolonged struggle with poverty, neglect, lack of appreciation, unsatisfactory human relations and—may one add, perhaps?—a total lack of due self-appreciation. For to the end of his life Boccaccio was unaware of his own standing as the peer of the Petrarch, in another field of endeavor, of his own pre-eminence as the originator of a classic and elegant prose style, as the father of modern humanism. "Full of laughter, humility and love," as his biographer says, Boccaccio in some sort prefigured the modern attitude toward life, that feeling that life itself is so much bigger than men, that humanity's place in the procession of events is, after all, but a minor one, and that our part in the universe is not one to make

* "Giovanni Boccaccio." By Edward Hutton. New York: John Lane Company, 1910.

us too haughty. The "Decameron," the great and various book by which his name is known, is, after all, but a small portion of his colossal life labor in the Latin and in the Tuscan tongues. His "*De Montibus*," "*Sylvis*," "*Fontibus*," "*Lacubus*," "*Stagnis seu Paludibus*," "*De Nominibus Maris Liber*," "*De Casibus Virorum Illustrum*," "*De Claris Mulieribus*," "*De Genealogiis Deorum*" by themselves would form a gigantic life-work of learning. In these works, however, he is chiefly a follower and a disciple of Petrarch, taking, as did Bacon after him, "all knowledge for his province" and ordering and setting together all those notes which are no less than a basis of modern culture. But it is as the creative author of "Fiammetta" and the "Decameron" that his name will live forever. Scholars make a link in the chain of human knowledge and have no separate names, but a creator is a sparkling jewel in the chain, marked forever as a break in its uniformity.

Born in all probability in 1313 in Paris, of a father who was a Florentine banker of importance and later on one of the five *Consiglieri*, and still later a representative of the Società de Bardi in Naples and well known to King Robert, very little is known of Boccaccio's mother. Mr. Hutton thinks the evidence leans to declaring her a girl of Paris belonging, perhaps, to the *haute Bourgeoisie*, and it is a mooted point whether his father and mother were ever married. Supposedly biographical passages in the "*Filocolo*" and the "*Ameto*" might point to this conclusion. At any rate, whether or not a natural son, Boccaccio's father to the end seems to have had forethought and care for this son who upset all his plans for himself and failed in every way to carry out the father's preconceived notions of either a commercial or diplomatic career.

The main point in Boccaccio's career was his love for Fiammetta, a much more human and realistic incentive to poetry and thought as it is handled by Mr. Hutton than it appears in the pages of John Addington Symonds's book on "Boccaccio as Man and Author." After the manner of those days, Fiammetta appeared to Boccaccio in a dream when he was no more than a lad of ten years.

"As I passed on my way there appeared to the eyes of my mind a most beautiful girl, in aspect gracious and fair, dressed all in garments of green, which befitted her age and recalled the ancient dress of the

city; and with joy she gave me welcome, first taking me by the hand, and she kissed me and I her; and then she said, sweetly, 'Come where you shall find good luck and happiness.'"

It was seven years later that he met Fiammetta in the flesh and crowned his youthful and lighter loves with a lifelong passion and devotion far from bringing nothing but luck and happiness, but doing more, perhaps, than any other external factor to turn an exuberant youth into a great man of letters.

Mr. Hutton's book is faithfully and well done, and is the more interesting that there is practically no other English biography of Boccaccio's to compare it with except that of Symonds's, which was done with insufficient data and facilities. It is, therefore, the first real attempt at a complete and reliable English biography of the great subject, and whether in the end it turns out to be the authoritative biography or not, it is informing and interesting reading.

One word of appreciation is due to the quaint and interesting woodcuts reproduced from illustrations of the early editions of Boccaccio. Mr. Hutton, in his preface, deploras the fact that he could not make of his illustrations a real chapter on Boccaccio and his relation to the fine arts. The matter he found too big for the present work; but the quaint and early woodcuts, many of them dating back as far as the early fifteenth century, add charm and value to the present volume.

Perhaps the frequent pictures of the great and unamiable Dr. Johnson* lend the chief value to this picture of life. A brilliant and unhappy woman, so well known as a *sàlonnière* that to relinquish that vocation made her appear to her contemporaries at least finally disgraced, Mrs. Thrale was, in despite of her biographer's able defence, not a lovable woman. She failed as a wife, as a friend and as a mother, and that she was herself uncomfortable and unhappy seems hardly an adequate excuse. Having made a loveless marriage, her cool and impartial judgments of her husband are more amusing than commendable; her careless relation to her daughters, whom she always speaks of as "the young ladies," is unnatural, and she was not above making scenes

* "Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale." By A. M. Broadley. New York: John Lane Company, 1910.